

IN THE SPECIFICATION:

Please replace paragraph [0028] with the following amended paragraph:

[0028] In contrast to the prior art use of a Cl_2 main etchant; an aspect of the present invention is use of HCl as a main etchant. HCl plasma comprises hydrogen and chlorine ions and radicals, which dissociation is different from that of Cl_2 . While not wishing to be bound by theory, it is believed that hydrogen is a reduction agent that helps convert unused or excess chlorine, as well as chloride by-products, to HCl gas. This results in less corrosive by-products disposed on one or more surfaces of etched MTJ stacks, as compared with Cl_2 plasma, as HCl gas may be pumped out of a chamber. Moreover, MTJ stack to resist mask selectivity with HCl plasma is better than that of Cl_2 plasma, so a single-mask layer of photoresist is more feasible for etching an entire MTJ stack 120. HCl may be used with additive gases such as CO , N_2 , or Ar to enhance MTJ stack to mask selectivity when mask material such as silicon oxide and the like is used. Notably, another hydrogen halide, such as HBr , may be used as an etchant gas in addition to HCl .